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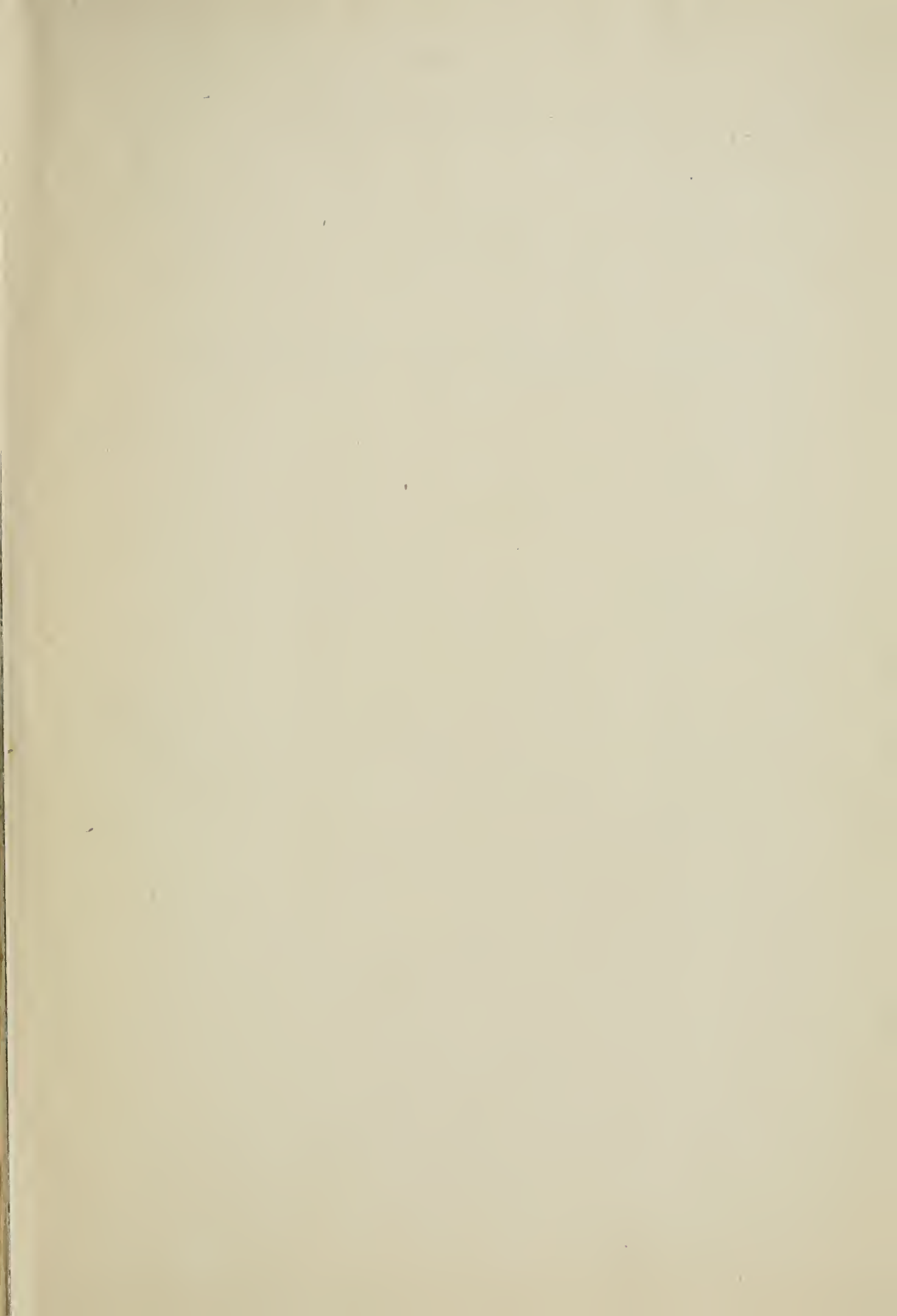
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DISCOURSE

ON THE

ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN,

PREACHED IN CAMP

BY REV. JACOB POST,

Chaplain of the 184th Regiment N. Y. V.,

At Harrison's Landing, Virginia,

APRIL 23d, 1865



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DISCOURSE.



"ROMANS, 6 ; 26. We know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

The words which I have chosen from the fountain of Divine Truth are full of consolation, and of the greatest importance for all who love their God and their Country.

Whatever this world may be to others, the true believer knows that all things work together for his good. Whatever the trials may be, which he encounters, he knows that God is the ruler of the universe, the conductor of His people, and as it is written that not a sparrow falleth down to the ground without our Heavenly Father's will, so the believer is led to believe that the national bereavement, which fell upon this nation like a thunderclap in a clear and cloudless sky, was part and parcel of God's holy and inscrutable will.

The death of Abraham Lincoln, by the hand of a traitorous assassin, at a time when all hearts yearned for a restoration of true national unity, and at the very threshold of peace, must be considered, by every true and God-fearing man, as an event fraught with mysterious designs by an all-wise and overruling God.

It has been observed, and should be remembered by all coming generations, that on Good Friday, the anniversary of the day on which our Savior was crucified, the closing hours of the great American Rebellion have been marked by its greatest crime ; a crime which will live in history as the most truthful representation of diabolical wickedness since the crucifixion of our Savior.

The life of the Redeemer of mankind was taken by an intolerant and bigoted hierarchy, who feared Him because He was the inspired revealer of the Divine Truth : "Peace and good will towards all men."

On the latest anniversary of that mournful occasion, when the Son of God was murdered, and expired on the cross, the life of Abraham Lincoln was taken by the representative of a set of autocrats, who defy the power of a free people and set at naught the righteous laws of God.

There was darkness over all the earth when, eighteen centuries ago, the Redeemer exclaimed "it is finished," and, while the elements sympathized with the pains of a dying Savior, they furnished also testimony to the dignity of the sufferer.

There was darkness and gloom on the mind of all throughout this broad land, when the electric wire trembled with the tidings "Abraham Lincoln is murdered." And we may safely conclude that there will be for a long while but one thought in the public mind, one feeling in the public heart, one theme of conversation in the army, in the tented field and in the parlor, in the mansion of the rich as well as in the humble dwelling of the poor; all of which are referable to the astounding tragedy, the appalling national calamity of Friday, the 14th day of April, 1865.

But, fellow soldiers, if it was a mystery eighteen centuries ago, that the Son of God should expire on the Hill of Calvary, if the immediate followers of Jesus stood doubting, fearing and trembling at the foot of the cross, the people and nations of the earth called the anniversary of that great event Good Friday, because in following generations it proved a day full of mercy and goodness towards the human race.

Let us then in hours of national sorrow, while God in His inscrutable providence has thus visited the nation, remove from our hearts all doubts and fears, leaving the future to Him who "doeth all things well;" and though the ways of Providence are often so dark and mysterious, let us rely upon the promise that "all things work together for good to them that love God."

Instead of giving ourselves over to the impulse of wrath, and the terrible sorrow that the national heart must feel for

him who fell a martyr for the unity of his country, let us rather be calm, subdue our passions, and looking as christian soldiers, and as a christian nation to the leader of all things, consider at this time the way in which we are led by an overruling Providence.

May this be the theme of our present meditation, and may the Spirit of God guide our heart and our mind, through Christ Jesus our Lord.

First. When we lift our eyes to the canopy of Heaven, and ask the Leader of all things to give us counsel and wisdom under the present calamity, our mind is directed towards Sacred History, and opening the book of all wisdom we read of a Moses, once leading the people of Israel for forty years through the wilderness, and at last, after many a rebellion against God and their earthly leader, the people were permitted to enter into the promised land. But Moses himself, he who led the people through many dangers, who had been with them in battle and in the heat and burden of the day, Moses himself was not permitted to enter into or take possession of the land of Canaan. He was only permitted to take a glance at it from Mount Pisgah, and then God Himself took charge of his burial.

Still, the work of Moses was done, the promise given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was fulfilled, and he could safely leave the people in the hands of Joshua, the hero and warrior, who exclaimed "as for me and my house we will serve the Lord."

How much resemblance the History of Moses may have to do with our late President I leave you to judge, but if the people of Israel were made to weep and mourn in the midst of triumph, I know that in the midst of our national triumph, God appeared and said, "*I shall be exalted.*"

Often, after many sorrows, perils and difficulties, the christian, as well as the greatest ruler and statesman, is not permitted to reap here on earth the harvest of his anxieties and care, but from the mountain of his highest expectation he

is only permitted to take a glance of the work he has accomplished, and then ordered to depart and be no more.

Now, I ask, if there are only few who are permitted to reap here on earth the rewards of their sorrows and cares, what would be this world if our mind could find no resting place? How could we live, if we had no conductor to lead us by night and by day; if we have not the conviction within us that we are under the control of an Almighty God, "Who doeth all things well?" The believer knows and feels within him that all things work together for his good, and he can say with David, under all calamities, "This God is my God forever and ever; He will be my guide even unto death." He knows that God, the Leader and Ruler of all, is a God of wisdom, and "knoweth what is good for a man in this life."

These observations are full of consolation in moments like the present, for in a time like this, who can distinguish between appearance and reality? Who can determine but what he wishes to shun is not a blessing, or what he covets is not a curse?

Truly, the way of man is not in himself. Hence the admonition and the promise—"Trust in the Lord with all thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge God and He shall direct thy paths." Yes, fellow soldiers, the words of the Lord come unto us at this peculiar time with double force, saying: "*I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not. I will lead them in paths that they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do for them, and not forsake them.*"

But, says the unbeliever, or he who stands aloof, doubting and fearing, if God, the Leader of all things, is infallibly wise; if we endeavor to convince ourselves that under His providence "all things work together for good," if we read in the Bible that God leads his people by the right way, when we look around us, how many things seem perfectly inconsistent with this acknowledgement? How often, when we

looked upon the various trials with which those that love God are exercised, how often we have been astonished to hear them exclaim with Gideon, "If the Lord be with us, why then is all this evil befallen us?" Why, we ask, must at the present time the head of thirty millions of people be hurried into eternity by the hand of a murderer? Why must the nation be bereaved in these days of momentous importance of so good, and noble, and honest a man as ABRAHAM LINCOLN? or according to what principle is it right that so many are persecuted by enemies and betrayed by friends?

Fellow soldiers, remember simply that a thing may be wrong in one way and right in another; and that the affliction of a nation or a simple christian never befel him without a good reason or wise Providence. In the system of nature we observe that winter is as necessary as summer, night as useful as day, yet for some purposes they are not equally good. A way that winds about may not be valued for its shortness, but it may be preferable for its safety. We often take on our marches another road to avoid steep hills or swamps, though the way is longer; but in taking the winding road we touch also at different places where we discover enemies or friends, and afterwards we see how good and profitable it was for our cause.

The correction which may appear cruel if considered only with regard to the feelings of the child, will appear very different when we connect it with his profit. So it may be with our present sorrow and national calamity. Many of the dispensations of Providence, if viewed separately and partially, would be objectionable; but they are right when considered in connection with their designs and the future welfare of a people. The history of the world is full of instances whereby we may observe that the most dreadful calamities were also the means in God's hand to bring about the most blessed results.

When in the seventeenth century William, Prince of Orange, (whose descendants are still on the throne of Holland,) when that noble prince was murdered by the hand of an as-

sassin, bought with Spanish gold, it seemed that my little country was annihilated and stabbed to the heart. But the terrible sorrow and wrath united the seven provinces of Holland as one man, and with the help of God they were able to overcome the united forces of Spain, England and France. Who can tell whether the death of ABRAHAM LINCOLN may not be the means in God's hand to unite the American people with stronger ties than human laws could make them? Who can tell whether the assassination of ABRAHAM LINCOLN may not be the means in God's providence to punish with united force the treachery and falsehood of these same enemies of the Netherlands? False to the North and treacherous to the South, these same nations may tremble when in future times the united forces of America under one banner remember the death of ABRAHAM LINCOLN!

But, O! fellow soldiers, let me pray as well as you for calmness and wisdom, subdue my passions and remember that God alone is capable of judging. His judgment is always good according to truth, and what seemeth good in his sight must be really good. We may possess great talents, and have acquired much knowledge. Yet no creature is infallibly wise. God alone cannot be deceived, his understanding is infinite and He alone seeth the end from the beginning.

Let us remember that we are so ignorant and can grasp so little of God's plans. We are often so occupied, so full of prejudices, so selfish, so earnest, so impatient, such very inadequate judges, giving full scope to our passions, that we often call evil good and good evil.

Let us then, under the sudden shock of a calamity so appalling, cling to the words of consolation that "All things work together for good to them that love God." "What I do," says our great leader, "thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Therefore, when he that trusts in God observes the things with which he is surrounded in the light of God's countenance, he will join the exclamations of those to whom all mysteries which once perplexed them

are now explained, and he will sing on earth as it is sung in Heaven, "Marvellous are thy works O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints."

Let me *secondly* add, that while the dispensations of Providence are often so dark and mysterious, we sometimes receive already here on earth, some glimpses into the designs of Heaven.

How often we are permitted to see already here below why God dealt with us in such a mysterious way, and how many times we are allowed to see how so many sorrows, trials and disappointments were on our pathway. Especially when the noise of passion has subsided, when God has wiped away the tears which bedimmed our eyes, how often could we hear the small still voice.

"I can now," says a Christian, "perceive the reason why I was so affected. I was making flesh my arm. I was leaning on the World and the things of the World. I was forgetting the fountain of living waters. In the days of my prosperity I was trusting in the things which did not belong to my everlasting peace." "I made gold my god" says another, "or I was trusting in my own strength. I ascribed praise and honor and glory to myself."

Truly, fellow soldiers, was it not so with us? Was it not the case with the Nation a few days since? Throughout the greatest part of our country the shout of rejoicing went up for our late victories, from almost every dwelling the national banner was displayed, and old and young, poor and rich, were fired with delight and poured forth in unbroken streams through our cities and villages. From every quarter came the tidings to our camp that the people at home were mad with joy as the news came to them that Richmond had fallen, and the mighty army of General Lee had surrendered.

Truly, it was right and just to rejoice. We ourselves shared in the general rejoicing, and the booming of the cannon at our front, mingling with the thunder of our noble navy on the James, was music in our ear.

But let me ask one solemn question. How many of us, how many of our friends at home, how many of the nation repaired also to their tents, to their closets and inner rooms, and bowed down in gratitude before the God of battles? How many throughout the land gave God the praise, who alone brought victory to our arms and crowned the efforts of our noble and valiant commanders?

While yet in the distance the din of war was heard, while the thunder of the cannon in the harbor of Mobile proclaimed there was no peace yet; while still in our own neighborhood thousands of human beings, (friends and enemies,) were laying on the battle-field wounded, dead or dying, while all our ward and field hospitals were filled with those who were agonizing in their pain, thousands and millions of our friends at home forgot all this, and gave themselves over to debauchery and revelry unbecoming our late victories, and I may say, a christian people.

While God permitted to raise again on the 14th day of April the emblem of liberty, the flag of our Union, upon the ruins of Fort Sumpter, after it had been trampled in the dust four long years, no temples of God were opened to commemorate this glorious event, but only a few assembled on that day to celebrate the anniversary of a dying SAVIOR. While throughout the world in Roman Catholic as well as Protestant countries, the people ceased from business, repairing to the temple of God to remember a SAVIOR's love, and prepare themselves for communion at his table, America ignored or forgot the fact, and only temples of vanity and drunkenness were filled with *noisy patriots*.

Ah, fellow soldiers, if we believe in a God of justice and holiness, can we be astonished that on the evening of that same day the country was shrouded in mourning, and the great rejoicing turned into deathlike stillness, manifesting the sorrow which pervaded the country, when it was told that ABRAHAM LINCOLN was assassinated. Well may it be said that God planted thorns in our way, for we were in danger of

ascribing too much, if not all praise to ourselves, to our rulers and generals. Therefore God in his faithfulness afflicted us in the most vital part the nation could be afflicted, and by a very terrible discipline is bringing us to look to God for light, and to lean upon His divine arm for further deliverance and restoration of true peace and union. While satisfied with the rectitude of the divine proceedings, let us then learn now to be more faithful, more wise and attentive, more true to our profession as a christian nation, trusting in the words which are written, "Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord."

Yes, my friends, as an ambassador of Christ, I fear not to say, that we as a nation too often go down from our watch tower, closing our eyes when we should run our race single to the glory of God ; and if we do not perceive at present the leading hand of an Almighty God, satisfying ourselves as usual with the appearance and not the *reality* of religion, there is reason to fear that still sorrow and anguish will come over this once so happy land, for God speaks to us and to our children, "If you will not believe, surely ye shall not be established."

Let us then lean under our present national calamity upon that God from whom proceeds no evil, trusting that indeed "all things work together for good," especially to those who love God. Remember it requires often only our attention to find out the most convincing proofs of His providence.

Let us, above all things, not give full scope to our passions and hatred towards the people of the South, but rather carry out the intentions of our late President to pursue a humane and conciliatory policy. No man in public life was less disposed than ABRAHAM LINCOLN to enforce the extreme rigor of the laws against the rebels. His kindness of heart had become proverbial. Many of his friends complained that he had an excess of that virtue, while his enemies accorded it to him. Every upright and loyal political opponent throughout

the North, of which I fear not to say I was myself one, was compelled to say in his heart that Mr. LINCOLN was an honest noble soul, well worthy to guide the ship of State through the terrible storm of the past, and we may well say that no event which could have occurred was so well calculated to make the people unanimous and intensify hatred of rebellion and treason, as this brutal assassination of our Chief Magistrate. I believe with certainty, that no loyal heart received the news of this murder with as great a shock as the hearts of those men who originated and have kept alive the flames of this rebellion. It has been remarked, and I believe it to be true, that these same men are wise enough to know that when the soul of ABRAHAM LINCOLN left the body it carried with it into the abyss of eternity the key of this nation's door of mercy to them, a door which in the kindness of Mr. LINCOLN's heart he had half unlocked.

For the sake then of the Southern people, and for that of true peace and union, we trust that the conspiracy to murder our late President and his Cabinet was unknown to the rebel leaders, that it originated with a few fanatical and brutal miscreants, alike destitute of character and influence. Well may we leave them in the hands of a God of Justice, even if the grasp of Nemesis should not overtake them in this world.

May God in His mercy comfort the hearts that mourn, be near to the weeping widow, and endow the sons of our deceased President with strength and wisdom from on high. May he spare to the nation those who have been stricken by the hand of the cruel murderer.

Let us all unitedly pray for wisdom and pour forth our supplications with renewed earnestness for our beloved country, for the newly inaugurated President and for all those who are to be the rulers of the destiny of our country.

Let us as a nation humble ourselves before the throne of our Almighty, Heavenly Father, and pray to avert his judg-

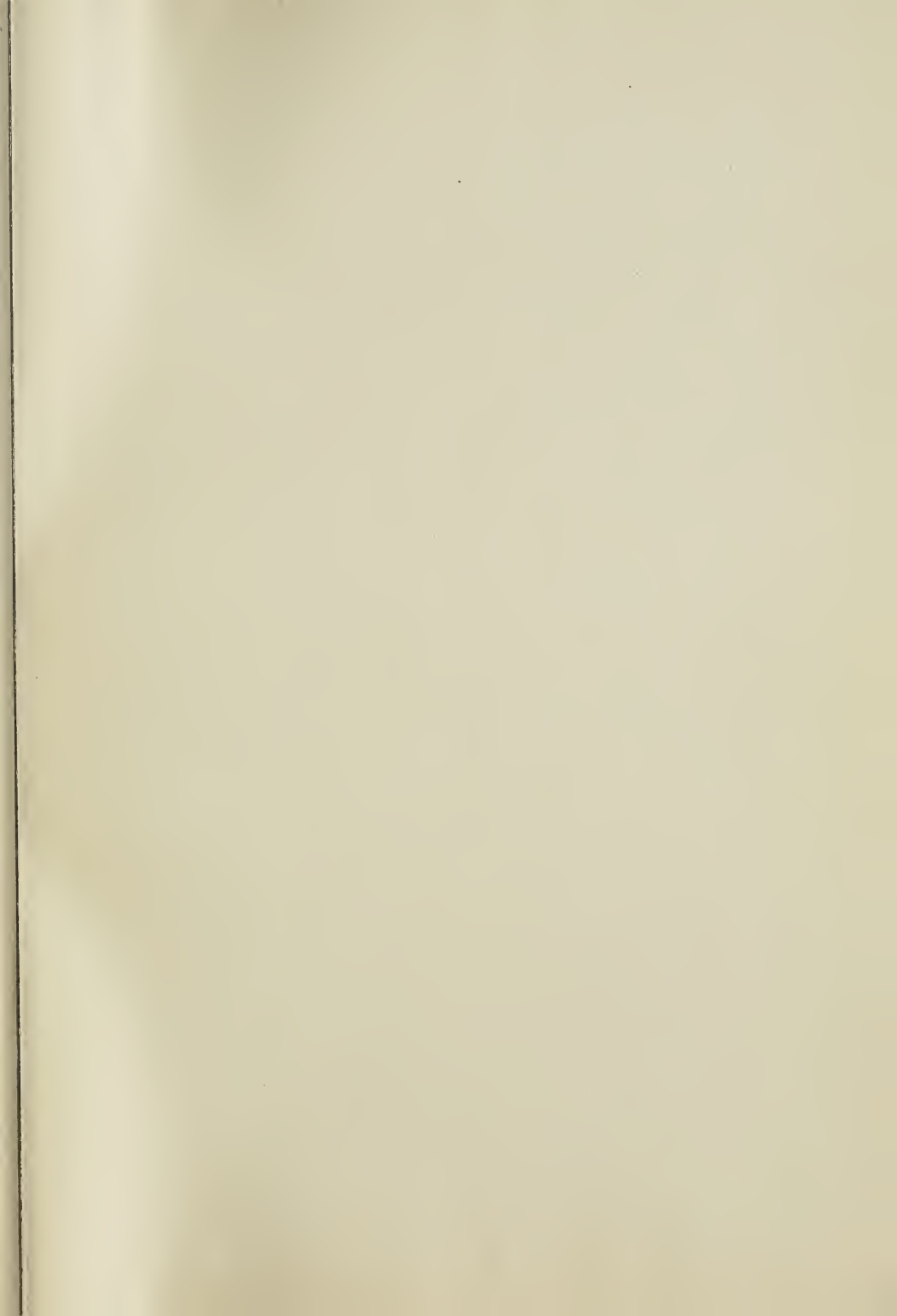
ments on the country and bring back to us peace, prosperity and happiness as a nation.

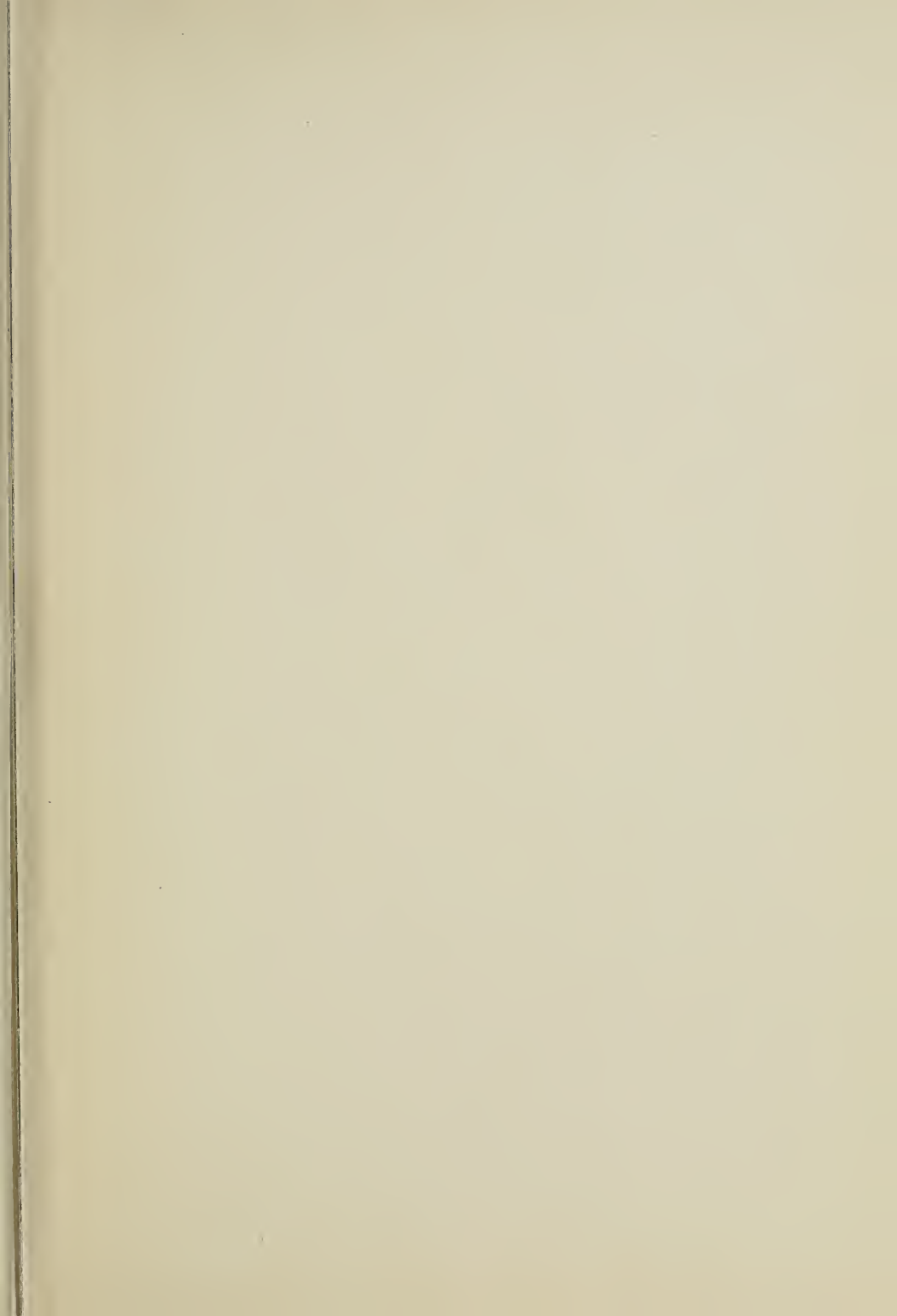
Are there any here who do not believe in an allwise and overruling Providence, who do not trust with all their heart in that great leader, who overruleth all and everything for our greatest good? Let them remember that they deprive themselves of a happiness and peace under all trials and sorrows which can be found alone in true and sincere religion.

And may the peace of God which passeth all understanding keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. AMEN.

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